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175 And since the male line of the Abkhaz kings was cut off with the death of the blind king Theodosius II, the Abkhaz kingdom, by right of the closest relation to that house, together with the appanages of the Bagratids of Samtskhe, was united with the Grusian kingdom, and Bagrat III assumed the title of the Grusian and the Abkhaz King. Since that time the Catholicoi of Mtskheta have assumed the title of the Catholicoi "of all Georgia" and sometimes "of all Georgia and Abkhazia." In the florescent period of Grusian history (tenth to twelfth centuries) all Abkhazia and especially its coastal parts were covered with towns, monasteries, churches, and fortified castles. From the end of the fifteenth century on, i. e. upon the fall of Byzantium and the replacement of the cross in the Hagia Sophia by the crescent, Mohammedanism gradually began to spread in Abkhazia; this trend was further favored by the circumstance that in that same century Georgia, weakened and ruined in the century-old struggle with the Mongols and later with the Persians and Turks, broke up in the fifteenth century into three kingdoms (Kakhetia, Kartlia, and Imeretia) and five principalities (Samtskhe, Svanetia, Mingrelia, Abkhazia, and Guria); moreover, the Turks subjugated Adzharia and began to spread Mohammedanism there. At this time also the Caucasian mountaineers (Lezgi /Lezgin/, Chechen, North Osset, Circassians, and others) renounced Christianity and accepted Mohammedanism. Georgia, surrounded on all sides by Mohammedanism, managed with difficulty to preserve her religion, but weak and small Abkhazia was unable to do so; Mohammedan doctrine spread widely there and would have completely swallowed up Christianity if the Georgians had not in good time called the Colossus of the North to the defense of all the ancient aborigines of the Caucasus.

127 In the compilation of the present ethnographical sketch of Abkhazia, the author has used as source-material and texts the following articles by Abkhazians: 1. "Abkhaziya i Abkhaztsy /Abkhazia and the Abkhaz/", an ethnographical sketch by P. Giorgidze, published in Iveria, 1888; 2. "Abkhaziya," /7/ an ethnographical sketch by K. Madchavariani, in the newspaper

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- 127 Droeba, 1884-1885; 3. "Očerok Abkhazskoy mifologii /Sketch of Abkhaz Mythology/, " by verovaniya abkhaztsev /Religious Beliefs of the Abkhaz/, " by A., in the Sbornik svedenii o kavkazskikh gortsakh, No. V; and 5. "Ekonomicheskoe položenie tuzemnago naseleniya Sukhumsakago otdiela /The Economic Condition of the Native Population of the Sukhum District/, " same author, in the same Sbornik, VI.

M. Dzhanašvili. April 25, 1892, Tiflis.

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Abkhazia and the Abkhaz

The Abkhaz -- His Character -- Robberies, Raids, and Thieving -- Eloquence of the Abkhaz -- Blood Vengeance -- Love of Homeland -- Hospitality, Politeness, and Friendliness -- Honesty -- Values -- Folk Games -- Poetry.

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The Abkhaz is a mountaineer of medium stature, slender, swarthy, with black hair and eyes. He is fearless, brave, and proud, but at the same time capricious and extremely quick-tempered. Besides his inborn giftedness, his beauty, and, in general, the likeable aspects of his character, he also exhibits quite a few negative traits, of which we shall speak below.

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Since the most ancient times the Abkhaz have been known as the most fearless and daring of robbers. They constantly raided their neighbors, pillaging and ruining them. For that matter, the habit of robbing and raiding is common to all the mountaineers in general. "Without robbery and raids, life is not worth living to a mountaineer," says Sergei Mech in his work. All his poetry, all the beauty of his existence is in this trait of the mountaineer. Only the tiger can be compared to the mountaineer in the suddenness and swiftness of his attack on a sleeping village in the deep, dark night. Going for plunder, the mountaineer is sure that

THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THE ABKHASIANS

(From the materials on Abkhasian ethnography)

By N. S. JANASHIA

[A translation of the article published in *Khristsianski Vestok*, The Christian East, Petrograd, 1915, vol. iv, No. 1, pp. 72-112.]

FOLLOWING the suggestion of N. Y. Marr that I should revise and translate into the Russian language my notes on "Materials on the ethnography of the Abkhasians", published 16-17 years ago in Georgian periodicals, chiefly in the journal *Moambe*, I made a careful review of all the collected "Materials", whether printed or still in manuscript form. In order to make the revision more complete I invited the aid of a special Commission from the Abkhasians of the village Adzvibzha, where the materials in question were actually collected. 114

The Commission consisted of the following persons: Mrs. Gidcha Janashia, my mother, with whose help the materials were checked originally; Kharikhan Tchengelia; Kelamat Delba, an eighty-year-old man, possessing a perfect knowledge of Abkhasian; Abdakhw Lolua, an orator; Alexis Dopua, who has a wide knowledge of tales and legends; Mushagw Tchengelia; and Alexis Janashia. The Commission worked with me for two days, the 2nd and 3rd July, 1914. 115

Furthermore, being still doubtful about certain aspects of my task, I checked the materials again at the meeting of the Adzvibzhuaans, during the month of August, and I found that all agreed in the main, differing only in matters of detail. One of my chief difficulties was that members of the Commission refused point blank to tell me tales I wanted to have in connection with my object, because "it is forbidden to tell tales in the daylight!" I therefore found it very hard to verify tales I had formerly taken down. So strong is the power of superstition nurtured for centuries! I am convinced that much that is incomprehensible in my "materials" would have been susceptible of explanation in the light of these tales. 124

All the ceremonies and rites herein presented are described by a man who has taken an active part in their observance; at first, during his childhood, when he was imbued with profound religious feeling, and later in life when, although no longer professing "faith", he approached them with the greatest interest with a view to their study. I have endeavoured to record all the details, discovering in them curious survivals preserved through the popular beliefs and customs of the Abkhasians. In my opinion these details represent invaluable material for the scientific study of religious observance. 123

I was at one time very much tempted to use the material I had 121

[12] already collected for the writing of a full-size monograph dealing with the religious beliefs and customs of the K'art's, Ibers, and Svans. However, after some reflection I decided that the time was not ripe for such a task as some necessary data were lacking and I therefore decided to publish only the notes. Here and there, however, I have not been able to restrain myself from touching upon certain considerations and inquiries belonging to the larger plane, and these have overflowed in the form of footnotes.

777 The founders of Christianity, realizing that it was not so easy after all to eradicate from the consciousness of the majority of the population religious beliefs and rites observed for thousands of years, endeavoured to transform them, by wrapping them up in their own clothing and so adapting them to the Christian feasts and saints; thus they established their own annual festivals. Wherever possible I have followed in my account the established order of church festivals.

128 776 I should further point out that all the material herein described was collected in one village only, namely, Adzvibzha, in southern Abkhasia (the province of Abzhua), which, according both to Georgian [648] and foreign (for instance, of the missionary A. Lamberti) historical sources constituted until the second half of the seventeenth century, part of Megrelia. This accounts for the fact that the Megrelian influence is so strongly noticeable. I think it is quite possible that some of the [184] beliefs herein described may be capable of a different interpretation in Northern Abkhasia.

776 I begin my notes with Ayt'ar. In the first place, however, it will be expedient to explain my views on the chief deity *antswd*,* God.

[192] *Antswd* is a compound word, consisting of *an*, "mother," and *tswa* (*ratswd*)—"many," which together denote "many mothers" or simply "mothers"; the word is thus in the plural form.¹ "In a formal or grammatical sense," says Dcharaia, "it is not an error; only the word 'mother' forms in the plural *antswa* and 'God'—*antswd*, i.e. the difference is in the accent. But in colloquial speech both words,

104 * The underlined *tsw* is a trigraph representing a sound uttered with one articulative effort or breath impulse, of which the digraph "*ts*" represents the front lingual affricate equivalent to German "*ts*" (*Zeit*, time), and the labial semi-vowel "*w*", the labialization of the preceding "*ts*". "*tsw*" thus represents a labialized variety of "*ts*". See N. Y. Marr, *The Abkhasian Analytical Alphabet* (in Russian), Leningrad, 1926, p. 31. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

¹ It would be premature at this stage to enter into the question of the identification of the conception "god" in Abkhasian, with "mother", and any attempt to give a morphological explanation of the form, which is incontestably the plural in *-tswe*, with the aid of the Abkhasian word *ratswa* would be superfluous (see N. Marr, *Definition of the Language of the Second Category of the Achaemenian Cuneiform Inscriptions* (in Russian), in *Zapiski* (Bulletin) of the Eastern Branch of the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society, St. Petersburg, 1915, 162. See also his *On the Origin of the Name Anaps* (in Russian). It is the usual linguistic method of the Abkhasians to interpret everything, even suffixes, such as the plural termination *-tswe* in the above instance, by means of the Abkhasian speech, with the aid of the Abkhasian words that survive to this day. [Note by the Editor of the *Kristianski Vestok*.]